

credit for agriculture sector for the year 1996-97 as Rs. 34,890 crores against which the actual amount of credit made available by all agencies during the year stood at Rs. 26,411 crores representing an achievement of 75.7%. Considering the demand projections arrived at on the basis of different assumptions and reckoning the matching supply of resources to sustain the same, the Working Group on Agricultural Credit & Co-operation for the formulation of Ninth Plan has made certain projections regarding the flow of credit to agriculture during the plan period, according to which the total credit flow from all agencies is expected to increase from existing Rs. 33,375 crores (1997-98) to Rs. 60,842 crores in 2001-2002 representing an annual compound growth rate of 16.1%.

Further, a number of steps have been taken by RBI and NABARD to enhance the credit flow to the agriculture sector. Some of these include, inter-alia, the following:

- (i) The commercial banks have been asked to increase the credit flow to agriculture by 25%.
- (ii) With a view to strengthen the financial capability of NABARD, its capital has been raised by Rs. 1000 crores during the past two years and is expected to be raised to Rs. 1500 crores during the end of this year.
- (iii) Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) have been given recapitalisation support.
- (iv) Banks have been advised to set up specialised agricultural branches in each State to exclusively deal with high-tech agricultural advance.
- (v) Banks have been advised to extend cash credit facilities for meeting composite credit requirements of farmers having a good track record.
- (vi) With a view to improving the access of small farmers to institutional credit, NABARD has advised co-operative banks to earmark funds in favour of small, marginal and economically weak farmers.

[English]

Paris Convention of IPR

2532. SHRI K.P. NAIDU : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India propose to join Paris Convention on Intellectual Property Rights; and
- (b) if so, the likely advantage to India therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT) : (a) and (b) The matter is under consideration of the Government.

Brahmaputra as a Tourist Destination

2533. SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose Brahmaputra as a tourist destination;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the action taken to increase activities like development of road and rail linkage amenities for tourists?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government of Assam has taken steps to develop tourist activities in Brahmaputra. The steps taken by the State Government in this regard include organising Brahmaputra beach festival, organising rafting expeditions, operating river cruises and road linkages to different tourist destinations.

Sidbi Branch in Vijayawada

2534 SHRI P. UPENDRA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state;

- (a) whether there has been a demand for opening of a branch of the Small Industries Development Bank of India at Vijayawada in view of the large number of small-scale industries in Vijayawada and surrounding areas; and
- (b) if so, the action taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING REVENUE & INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARATHANAN) : (a) Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has received representations from Andhra Pradesh Small Industries Association, Vijayawada and some Members of Parliament to establish a branch of SIDBI at Vijayawada.

(b) SIDBI which has branches at the State Capitals, has been undertaking branch expansion programme in small scale industries (SSIs) clusters with a need based approach. SIDBI has already opened its second branch office at Visakhapatnam in the State of Andhra Pradesh in March 1997 keeping in view the request received from SSI units and other relevant factors. The requirements of the SSI units in and around Vijayawada are at present being taken care of by SIDBI's office at Hyderabad. The suggestions received by SIDBI for establishing a branch at Vijayawada would be kept in view while considering the branch expansion programme of SIDBI in future.